

the central tail feathers prolonged and the birds were slightly bigger than the Common Green Bee-eaters but slightly smaller than the Blue-tailed Bee-eaters, a colony of which had nesting holes on a vertical sand bank. After watching them for sometime, the pair flew southwards towards Rajpipla. When I returned to Bombay, though I had with me Sálím Ali's invaluable BOOK OF INDIAN BIRDS, for reference I checked up my notes in with the specimens and also the HANDBOOK of Indian Birds Vol. 4, Ali-Ripley at the BNHS and was convinced

that the pair was that of the Chestnut-headed Bee-eaters. Since these birds are not recorded north of Goa or Belgaum, it might be the northernmost record for the species in Western India. The birds were recorded on 5th June, 1981 in the morning. These birds do have sudden local migrations as stated in the HANDBOOK. The birds seen appear to be migrating and were not found in regular forest but amongst scattered trees and shrubs not far from the Narmada river.

45/46, MADHURIMA,
M. G. ROAD,
KANDIVLI (WEST),
BOMBAY - 400 067,
August 17, 1981.

S. G. MONGA

13. SUNBIRDS FOSTERING FLEDGLINGS OF THE PLAINTIVE CUCKOOS

On two occasions I have seen sunbirds being used by the Plaintive Cuckoo as foster parents for its young. Both incidents were observed in my garden in Pune. The first time I saw this was during the 1960s when I saw a pair of Purple Sunbirds (*Nectarinia asiatica*) bring up a fledgling cuckoo.

More recently, in 1978, I have photographed the Purplerumped Sunbird (*Nectarinia zeylanica*) rearing the young of the Plaintive Cuckoo.

The nest was in a Jambul tree in my garden at Bund Garden Road. For several days I had seen a rather large head popping out of the nest for feeds. Shortly thereafter there was a storm, the nest broke open and I saw the cuckoo fledgling, clumsily fluttering around, and noisily following its little foster parents. It had dark brown bars over its back and wings and a lighter streaked buff belly. There

was a pale patch on his wing better seen in flight. I observed them for more than a week by which time he had grown considerably larger. The foster parent's head would be engulfed in his gaping mouth during each energetic feed.

Looking for references I have come across one published by M. F. Suter (JBNHS, 45: 235). He had seen a cuckoo chick fostered by purple sunbirds and being also fed in turn by Tailor birds in Pune in 1944. I believe another similar observation has also been made in Pune in the 1980s.

I have thus come across four instances of such parasitism all from Pune, the earliest in 1944. This might indicate a local change in the pattern of parasitism?

A female cuckoo is believed to use the same host for parasiting as she herself was reared by. Thus if early imprinting results in the

female cuckoo selecting nests similar to the one she was born in, these birds which have been reared by sunbirds will look for sunbird nests to lay their own eggs when they become

adults. The new pattern should then become more common. Further observation especially in Pune may throw more light on the problem.

23/5, BUND GARDEN ROAD,
PUNE - 411 001,
August 24, 1981.

ERACH K. BHARUCHA

14. MAGPIE-ROBIN FEEDING ON GECKOES

Recently, I have observed for several evenings in succession, an adult female Magpie-Robin, late in the evenings, swooping on to medium-sized (about 3 inches in total length) *Hemidactylus leschenaulti*, on the outer walls of our bungalow in the scrub-jungle. At every swoop from its hovering in the air, the robin pecks at the pelvic region of the gecko, perhaps to disable the gecko, and when it falls

to the ground ultimately, the bird pecks off the contents of the abdomen first, and then eats away the rest of the body, tearing it piece-meal. Just one gecko a day, but the same female Magpie-Robin everyday, at the same time, from among the nearly 3 to 4 pairs of these robins permanently residing and nesting in the ceiling of our bungalow.

5, COLLEGE ESTATE,
MADRAS CHRISTIAN COLLEGE,
Tambaram, Madras 600 059,
August 21, 1979.

STEPHEN SUMITHRAN

15. OCCURRENCE OF FOREST WAGTAIL (*MOTACILLA INDICA* GMELIN) IN NAGZIRA SANCTUARY, BHANDARA DISTRICT (MAHARASHTRA)

On 24th April 1981 during the carnivore survey of Nagzira, I spotted a wagtail which appeared to be a Forest Wagtail (*M. indica*) on the edge of a tank. The white wing bars, the necklaces and the habit of swaying its tail sideways made this bird quite unmistakable.

I watched it for about 10 to 15 minutes until it took flight and disappeared into the woods. I searched for it thereafter but never saw it again.

This is apparently the first record for this part of the Peninsula.

27A/1, CIVIL LINES
NAGPUR,
August 18, 1981.

NITIN JAMDAR

[The Forest Wagtail has a very capricious winter distribution in the Subcontinent and may sporadically occur as a vagrant almost anywhere, even in the most unlikely localities and habitats. One has been recorded from Thatta district of Pakistan! (JBNHS 75: 218. 1976) — Eds.]